

- NH A29. Revise zoning ordinance to encourage quality infill development that reflects the character of the neighborhood including infill development standards.

Affordable Housing

- NH A30. Develop a plan for the location of shelters, transitional living facilities, and day facilities that provides appropriate services in all areas of the City and the region, taking into account access to public transportation and proximity to other support services.
- NH A31. Develop affordable housing plans including programs that include a mix of housing types and opportunities for both rental and homeownership as part of the housing plan.

3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

BACKGROUND

Natural Environment

Roanoke's natural environment is one of its most important assets. The City's location amid the Blue Ridge Mountains, combined with access to natural resources such as the Roanoke River, Blue Ridge Parkway, Smith Mountain Lake, and parks, provides a natural environmental quality in an urban setting. Consequently, how the region conserves and protects the natural environment is particularly important to the quality of life for Roanoke's residents. Regional cooperation and joint environmental programs and protection policies are essential to maintaining the natural environment residents enjoy.

Parks and Recreation

Roanoke's parks system consists of more than 60 parks and eight neighborhood recreation centers located throughout the City. In September 2000, City Council adopted the *Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan* as a component of the *Roanoke Vision 1985-2005 Comprehensive Plan*. The master plan balances the customer requirements for



larger-scale recreation facilities, such as an aquatic facility, with the benefits of smaller-scale neighborhood parks and open space. Funding for full implementation of the *Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan* has not been identified; the City has committed to incremental phases of construction or rehabilitation.

Greenways

Greenways are corridors of protected open space that are managed for recreation, conservation, and non-motorized transportation. In 1997, City Council adopted a conceptual greenways plan as a component of the City's comprehensive plan. The City currently has seven greenways in various stages of planning or development. Priority projects include the Railside Linear Walk, the Mill Mountain Greenway, the Lick Run Greenway, the Roanoke River Greenway, the Tinker Creek Greenway, and the Murray Run Greenway. Funding for greenways is a combination of City funds, in-kind/case donations, state grants, and federal reimbursement grants generally funded through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Storm Water Management

Roanoke's watersheds experience periodic flooding and are subject to non-point source pollution from storm water runoff, especially sediment from increased development. Erosion of stream banks is a problem requiring bank stabilization. Storm water inflow and infiltration into the sanitary sewer system have caused sanitary overflows with potential degradation of water quality.

In 1998, the City participated in a regional storm water management plan that recommends regional policies for managing storm water. Regional detention basins were identified, but there are high costs associated with acquisition and construction. The City has constructed two basins in the Peters Creek watershed.

Phase II of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit must be implemented by 2003 and a storm water discharge permit obtained by the City to address storm water quality. At the present time, the local municipalities are approaching this task on a regional basis. A storm water management authority may be proposed to manage a regional facility.

Roanoke River and the Flood Reduction Project

The Roanoke River is an environmental and economic asset that adds to the quality of life in Roanoke and attracts visitors and tourists to the City. The 1989 Roanoke River Flood Reduction Project is in final design and property is being acquired. Construction is expected to start in 2002. Construction will extend from the Water Pollution Control Plant to the west City limits. Flood reduction of up to three feet in some areas can be expected as a result of the project. The project includes a five-mile recreation trail extending from Wasena Park to 13th Street, S.E.

Air Quality

Air quality is an issue of concern for all of the municipalities in the Valley. The Roanoke Valley will likely be designated as a non-attainment area for ozone in the near future. It is expected that by 2002, regulations will be established by the Department of Environmental Quality to mitigate pollutant levels. This will mean implementation of measures to reduce pollutant discharges such as vehicle emissions and industrial discharge.

Tree Canopy

Trees and plants in general improve the air quality by converting carbon dioxide into oxygen. Maintaining and increasing the City's tree canopy will have a beneficial impact on air quality, storm water control, noise levels, temperature, and visual appearance. The City nursery stock is utilized to replace neighborhood street trees that are diseased or damaged. As the City adds new landscaping features, special attention will be paid to using plants that are tolerant to the urban environment, primarily indigenous species. The City's development regulations currently require all new development to include a landscape plan.

Cultural Resources

Roanoke is the arts and cultural center of western Virginia, exhibiting substantial historic and cultural resources for a city of its size. Located in downtown Roanoke, Center in the Square houses five major cultural institutions and serves over 500,000 people per year, making it the largest museum and performing-arts complex in the State. The historic City Market has become a central focus for arts and entertainment activities and is listed as one of the most livable places in America.

The Harrison Museum of African American Culture displays artifacts and memorabilia that preserve and interpret African-American heritage in southwestern Virginia and include art exhibits featuring local, regional, and national artists. The Roanoke Civic Center and Victory Stadium host special events. The Virginia Museum of Transportation is also a tourist draw that celebrates Roanoke's railroad heritage and the transportation history of the region and the state. The Dumas Drama Guild provides additional theatrical and cultural venues.

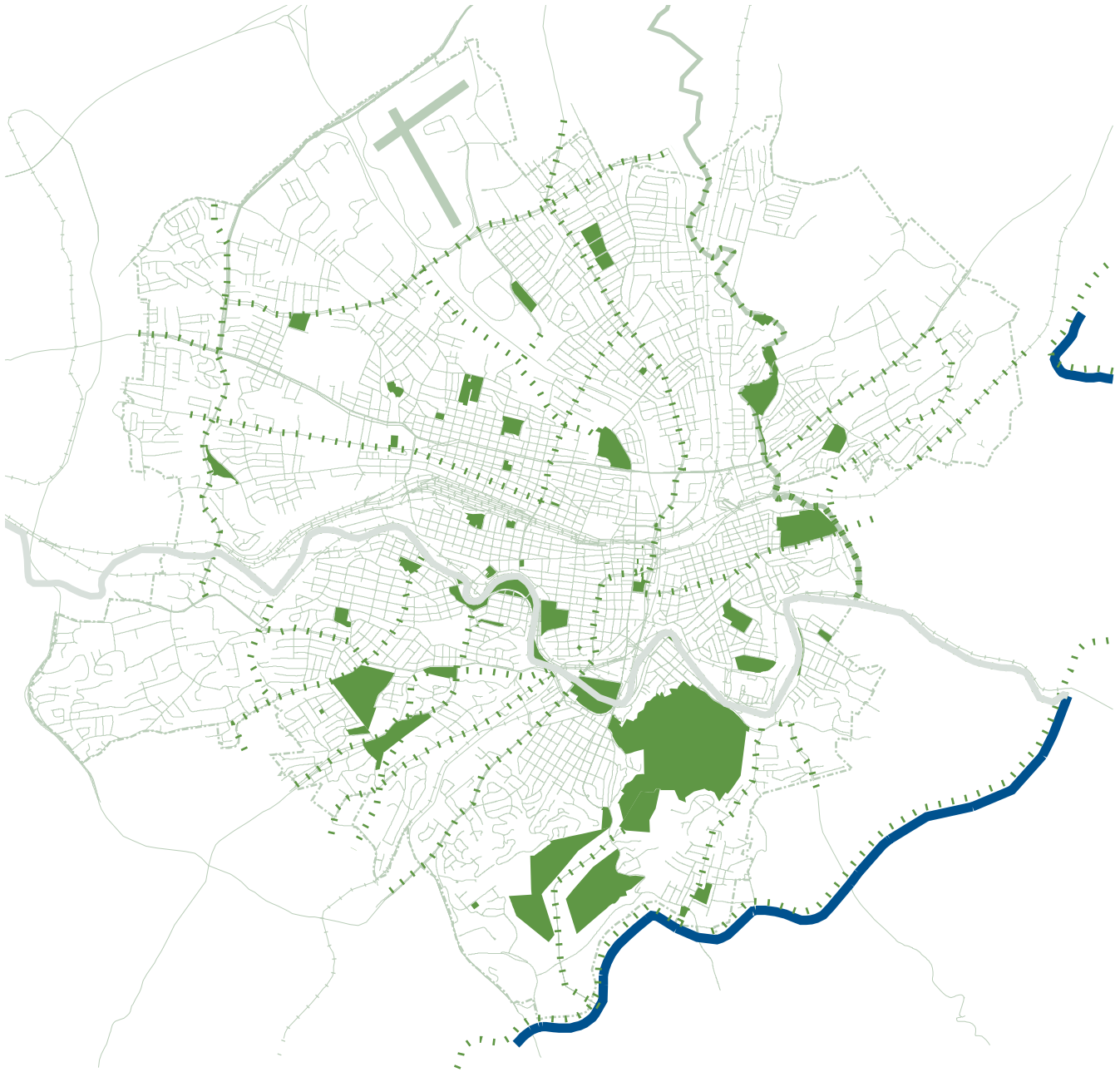
The Jefferson Center, a newly renovated facility located in close proximity to downtown, also houses several cultural institutions including the recently renovated Shaftman Performance Hall. Center in the Square houses several museums including the Arts Museum of Western Virginia, the History Museum of Western Virginia, and the Science Museum of Western Virginia, as well as the the Mill Mountain Theatre and the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge. Mill Mountain Zoo, located on City-owned Mill Mountain, provides an enjoyable animal attraction for both young and old.

Historic Resources

The City has three Virginia and National Register Historic Districts, which are also protected locally: City Market District, the Warehouse Row, and the Southwest Historic District in the neighborhoods of Old Southwest, Hurt Park, and Mountain View.

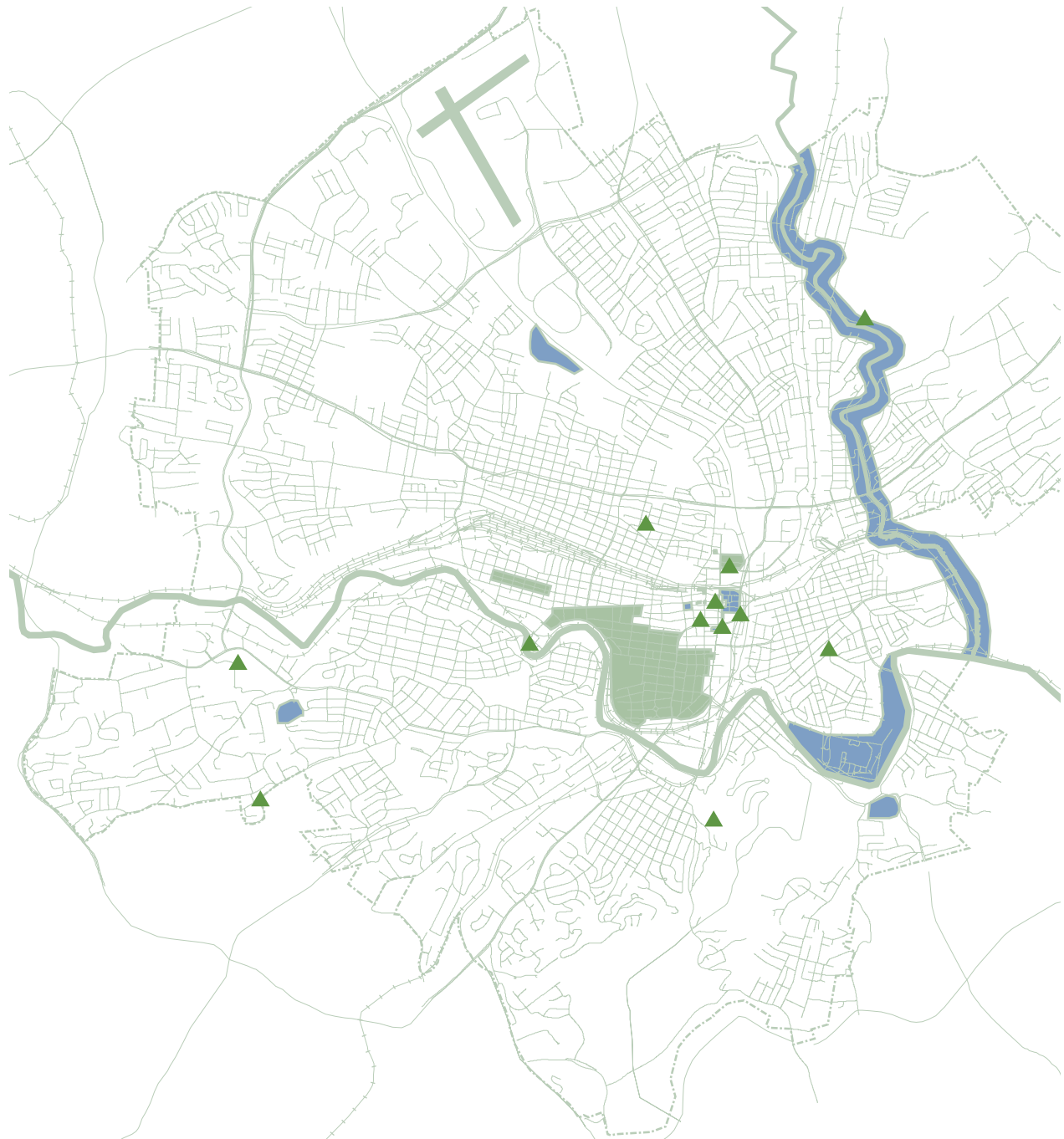
Historic designation has contributed to the City's revitalization through improved property maintenance and economic incentives for rehabilitation. Roanoke is currently undertaking a survey to identify additional historic structures in the downtown to promote further economic development and historic preservation strategies. The Historic and Cultural Resources map (Map 3.2.2) identifies the three Virginia and National Register Historic Districts, National Register structures, and potentially significant archaeological sites.





3.2.1 Environmental Resources

- Parks
- Proposed Greenways
- Blue Ridge Parkway



3.2.2 Historic and Cultural Resources

- Local Historic Districts
- National Register Properties
- Sensitive Cultural/Archeological Resources

POLICY APPROACH

Roanoke's natural environment contributes to the overall high quality of life for residents. It is also an important economic development and tourism asset. Many high-tech entrepreneurs and employees place a high value on the overall quality of life in making decisions about where to locate. As the City aggressively pursues the growth of knowledge-based industries, the overall quality of life and quality of the natural environment will be critical elements to a successful development strategy.

While natural resources are abundant, they are also fragile and must be protected. Local action and regional cooperation are crucial in achieving the goals of protecting and enhancing our environmental quality, protecting our viewsheds and mountain ridges from developments, and developing a comprehensive network of greenways and pedestrian facilities throughout the Valley. Roanoke should work with surrounding localities to create regional awareness of the importance of our environment to our overall economic strength. Roanoke should resist the conversion of park land for other purposes without replacing it.

At the present time, each jurisdiction protects and manages the recreation, conservation, and open space within its boundaries. As many of these resources cross jurisdictional lines and enhance the quality of life for all Valley residents, it is appropriate to encourage further discussions on regional recreation and environmental management. A regional park authority could be a mechanism to provide larger recreation centers such as water parks serving a regional population or the conservation and management of large parcels of open space.

Trees and other vegetation represent both an environmental resource and an important landscape feature in the quality of life in the City. Maintaining and increasing the City's tree canopy will have a beneficial impact on air quality, storm water control, noise levels, temperature, and visual appearance. Additional initiatives could include a tree replacement policy when trees must be removed for site development. Regional efforts to preserve trees in the Valley would be beneficial to the entire community.

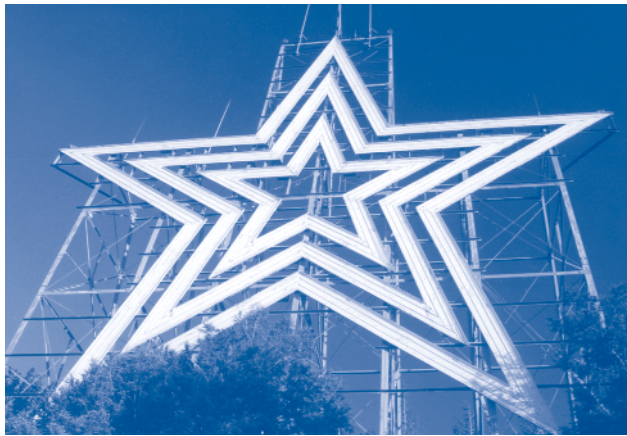
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE



Investing in Critical Amenities: Roanoke and the Valley face the challenge of maintaining and enhancing critical amenities such as natural resources, entertainment attractions, cultural organizations, recreational opportunities, and a well-designed cityscape. These critical amenities must be enhanced and expanded if the region is to fulfill its economic development potential and enhance the quality of life for residents. The regional community needs to define new methods to share the cost of maintaining and financing such attractions. Concepts such as the Blue Ridge Asset District and earmarking lodging and cigarette-tax increases are recommended as potential approaches.

Roanoke's arts, entertainment, and cultural resources are both a City and regional resource for tourism and economic development. Clustering activities that add a 24-hour vibrancy to downtown can be achieved by providing a mix of housing opportunities and quality retail space, as well as designating an area as a technology zone for new and emerging technology industries.

Roanoke's cultural and historic institutions generate more than \$30 million a year in economic benefit for the local economy. Tax credits should be used to establish and expand National Register Historic Districts. To successfully market Roanoke as a destination for visitors and new business, it will be important to create a clear identity or "brand name" for the City and surrounding area.



The same energy, creativity, and enthusiasm that marketed Roanoke as the "Star City" must be used in developing a new name that will market Roanoke as it emerges as the biotechnology center of a multi-state region. A regional funding mechanism is needed to support a stable source of funding for the environmental, entertainment, and cultural assets and to develop an aggressive marketing strategy.

POLICIES

- EC P1. **Parks and recreation.** Roanoke will develop, maintain, and manage parks and recreation facilities that enhance the City's and the region's quality of life.
- EC P2. **Greenways.** Roanoke will develop a high-quality network of regional greenways for recreation, conservation, and transportation.
- EC P3. **Viewsheds.** Roanoke will protect steep slopes, ridgetops, and viewsheds within the City as important environmental and scenic resources and will cooperate regionally to protect such resources located outside of the City.
- EC P4. **Environmental quality.** Roanoke will protect the environment and ensure quality air and water for citizens of the region. Special emphasis will be placed on the Roanoke River and its tributaries. Storm water management will be addressed on a regional as well as a local level.
- EC P5. **Trees.** Roanoke will maintain and increase its tree canopy coverage as a way to improve air quality. Roanoke will work regionally to promote tree planting and tree preservation Valley-wide.
- EC P6. **Cultural and historic resources.** Roanoke will support, develop, and promote its cultural resources. Roanoke will identify, preserve, and protect its historic districts, landmark features, historic structures, and archaeological sites.
- EC P7. **Blue Ridge Parkway.** Roanoke will protect the Blue Ridge Parkway and the spur within the City from development.

ACTIONS

Parks and Recreation

- EC A1. Establish funding mechanisms to implement park plans (Phase II & Phase III) and greenways plan in a timely manner.
- EC A2. Encourage regional cooperation to develop and manage parks and recreation facilities that serve multiple jurisdictions (e.g., large recreation centers and aquatic centers). Conduct an assessment of the parks and the recreational needs of the region and consider the formation of a Regional Park Authority.
- EC A3. Consider establishing appropriate user fees for recreation facilities.

Greenways

- EC A4. Develop strategies that encourage development of the Roanoke River Greenway for the entire length of the Roanoke River within the City limits. Consider developing an "adopt a greenway" program that encourages private and nonprofit sector involvement in the funding of greenways.
- EC A5. Establish weekend bus service between downtown and natural resource destinations such as Explore Park, Carvins Cove, and the Appalachian Trail.
- EC A6. Increase funding to accelerate construction of the greenway network.
- EC A7. Promote trails on City-owned land, where feasible and suitable.
- EC A8. Promote and increase access to trails and natural areas by providing parking, guide maps, and appropriate marking.

Views and Viewsheds

- EC A9. Develop a viewshed protection ordinance and seek regional approaches.
- EC A10. Encourage reduced light pollution from development, particularly in residential neighborhoods, by improving development or ordinances.
- EC A11. Adopt zoning regulations that address communication towers to minimize their visual impact.
- EC A12. Protect Blue Ridge Parkway corridors adjacent to City limits through coordination with adjacent localities and careful planning.

Water Quality

- EC A13. Limit the amount of impervious surfaces to reduce runoff.
- EC A14. Plant natural vegetation, preferably indigenous plant species, on land adjacent to the Roanoke River.
- EC A15. Ensure integrity of the storm and waste water systems.
- EC A16. Protect and stabilize creek banks by controlling storm water flow and preventing discharge through vegetative buffers, bioengineering, and other related methods.

- EC A17. Protect the shorelines of the Roanoke River to enhance their scenic quality and protect water quality through a river conservation overlay and other appropriate tools.

Air Quality

- EC A18. Promote programs that raise awareness and reduce air pollution through testing, education, incentives, transit, and other related policies.
- EC A19. Consider use of clean-burning fuels to enhance air quality.
- EC A20. Establish tree canopy goals that include standards for preservation and planting of native trees based on zoning district and density.

Environmental, Historic, and Cultural Resources

- EC A21. Develop a comprehensive regional marketing strategy that promotes Roanoke as an outdoors destination (Blue Ridge Parkway, Carvins Cove, mountains, trails, on-road bike routes, Virginia Birding Trail, Mill Mountain, etc.).
- EC A22. Expand walking and driving tours of historic and cultural resources.
- EC A23. Develop a stable source of funding from regional resources for cultural, historic, and recreation amenities such as a Blue Ridge Asset District.
- EC A24. Develop a local funding strategy for environmental programs, conservation easements, and cultural programs.
- Earmark lodging and cigarette-tax increases for tourism and critical amenities.
 - Establish general fund matching grant program to leverage additional partnership funding.
 - Consider voluntary contributions to critical amenities on utility bills.
- EC A25. Develop entertainment venues for concerts on Mill Mountain and other open areas.
- EC A26. Undertake a comprehensive inventory of historic and cultural properties and districts in the City and consider historic districts, where applicable. Solicit neighborhood and stakeholder input in the inventory, where applicable.
- EC A27. Promote local, state, and federal incentives to include tax credits to encourage rehabilitation of historic structures.

Public and Open Spaces

- EC A28. Revise zoning regulations to better address the placement of billboards in Roanoke and regulate maintenance of existing ones.
- EC A29. Work with conservation organizations to identify critical open space or sensitive environmental properties and pursue the purchase of conservation easements.
- EC A30. Encourage preservation of open space and farm land through appropriate land use programs.